

FRONTLINE NEWS

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DOC's new officers take their Oath of Office. Photo Credit: Darby Baham

29 Strong: DOC Graduates New Officers

With a theme of “29 in and 29 out,” DC DOC’s latest recruitment class marched into their graduation ceremony on May 30, 2013 with pride and precision. The class, which consisted of 18 male and 11 female officers, stood proudly as the largest officer class under Director Faust and Training Academy Administrator, Michael Brown’s leadership.

Mr. Brown acknowledged certain challenges with such a large class, but also recognized his staff for the commendable job they performed in training the group. “An Academy class of 29 presented a few unique challenges when it came to the practical exercises,” he said. “Going into the housing unit to practice crime scene response is a prime example. In order to effectively critique and evaluate the recruits, they had to be broken up into groups, [and] it took longer to evaluate the defensive tactics portion of the academy. Little things like that were impacted, but over all my staff stepped up to the challenge.”

During the ceremony, the officers were greeted by Director Faust and Deputy Director Cross, as well as by their fellow Officer — Recruit Johnson Abiola, in his rousing speech that included everything from personal reflections to impersonations of the staff.

Following the remarks and awarding of certificates, the officers stood and took their oath with Warden Futch, and then pinned each other with their new badges. The ceremony ended with a special award given to Mr. Kent Dixon by the class and hugs from family and friends.

By Darby Baham

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*Michael Brown,
Training
Administrator*



DOC Employees Join Together to Create Walking Crew



DOC employees get started on their walk after stretching near the jail. Photo Credit: Regina Gilmore

One glance at the group of officers walking together around the jail might make someone wonder if a drill was occurring, but DC DOC's Midnight Walkers are not walking for work—they are walking to improve their health.

Started in March by Captain Sharon Cain-Smith, the Midnight Walkers began from the simple idea that some of her fellow officers might appreciate a co-worker support system to get more active. "I felt that we as a team needed to improve on our health," said Captain Cain-Smith. "[And] this was a good idea because we could motivate each other."

She was right. According to the American Heart Association, walking has several health and weight loss benefits, including reducing heart disease and improving blood pressure levels.

The group began with twenty-five DOC employees, and while it is now a membership of fifteen, Captain Cain-Smith says she can see how the program has helped improve the lives of those involved—a fact that may motivate others to join the walkers on their journey. "The officers have lost a lot of weight and [combined with] eating right, several have lost over 20 pounds," she said. "They are [also] now up to 10 miles."

Currently, the Midnight Walkers meet and walk on Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays of every week at 8am (after the midnight shift ends). Those interested in joining should contact Captain Cain-Smith for more details.

By Darby Baham

Congresswoman Norton Visits During Mother's Day Program

The women and mothers of the Correctional Treatment Facility were treated to a special guest on May 10, 2013 — a visit from Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, representative from the District.

Congresswoman Norton spoke briefly to the inmates as part of their Mother's Day program, entitled "Celebrating Generations of Strong and Empowered Women," and encouraged them to continue seeking a better life for themselves. She also stayed for a short time and watched as the women put on their program, honoring the mothers in the audience.

Sharon Hargrove, Program Specialist for the Women's Adjusting our Attitude Training Program (AOAT), was really happy that the women were able to hear the Congresswoman speak, especially because many initially believed it was something that could not be accomplished. "One of the components of the Adjusting our Attitude Training Program is group discussions," said Ms. Hargrove. "During Black History Month, we discussed Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, at which time one of the female offenders asked would it be possible to have her a guest, and I stated to her [that] 'Failure is not an option.' After contacting the Congresswoman's office via email, she accepted the invitation to be the guest speaker for the Mother's Day event. The women were elated and inspired by her presence and her speech."

Following Congresswoman Norton's speech, the women continued their program, which included reciting poems, singing inspirational songs, stepping, and liturgical dancing.



From left to right—Sharon Hargrove, Chaplain Green, Congresswoman Holmes-Norton, Deputy Director Cross, Regina Gilmore, and Dr. Lane
Photo: Darby Baham

By Darby Baham

Getting to know Major Coley

With over 25 years in Corrections, Walter Coley returned to the DC Department of Corrections this year to serve as a Major in the DC Jail after initially retiring in December 2011. He takes on this role after first joining the DC DOC as a correctional officer at the Maximum Security Facility in Lorton, Virginia in August 1985. Since then, he has served as an Officer, Private, Corporal, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain before being pinned as Major by Director Faust on June 13, 2013.

Major Coley has served as a supervisor of correctional personnel in his previous terms with the DC DOC. He also participated in the training and evaluation of officers, served as a reviewing officer, and provided oversight in the attainment of mandates, institutional goals and objectives.

Major Coley has participated in training by the National Institute of Corrections, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Workforce Development Administration. He is a certified Correctional Manager by the American Correctional Association and holds two degrees from Towson State University, in Psychology and Business.

Profile: Meet Major Coley

This Spring, Walter Coley rejoined the Department as one of the new Majors hired under Warden Futch.

On June 13th, he was officially pinned by the Director in a ceremony recognizing his new position. Please read below to learn more about Major Walter Coley.



Q: What led you into a career in Corrections?

A: My father led me to a career in Corrections. He worked for DC DOC at Grimke in the early 80's. He worked procurement and felt that it was a good career for him and thought that it would be a good career for me.

What was your first entry into the Corrections industry?

A: My experience in corrections began in July of 1984. I worked as a counselor at the Oak Hill Juvenile institution. I began my career with the D.C. Department of Corrections in August of 1985 as a correctional officer at the Maximum Security Facility in Lorton, Virginia.

What was the driving force/reason for your return to DOC?

A: I recognized that there were positive strides being made in the agency that I felt would actually effect a change in the culture of the department, and I wanted to be a part of it.

Q: What are you most looking forward to in your position as Major?

A: I am looking forward to seeing growth in officers as they progress through the ranks. As far as their occupational knowledge and their ability to effectively deal with the inmate population.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself—some of your hobbies and interests.

A: I have become an avid golfer in the last 4 years. During my retirement, I was able to satisfy that desire. Since returning to duty, scheduling tee times has become more of a challenge, but I still manage to get in a round or two a week.

Incarcerated Youth Program Wins Mock Trial

On April 25th, the students of DCPS' Incarcerated Youth Program participated in a National Mock Trial Program, competing against Georgetown Law students. The Mock Trial was the culminating activity of the year-long Street Law Class coached by Shawn Pelote and Tiara Tyson. Teachers in the program, Georgetown Law student David Carlyle, and attorneys from the Georgetown Law group also assisted in teaching the students various facets of the law, such as probable cause and reasonable suspicion.

After months of learning about the law and how it applied to their lives, the students were ready to apply their skills and knowledge to a real case. The scenario that students were asked to read, review and examine was based on a school event in which a security guard was breaking up a fight, and in the process his tattoo was visible, and thus violated school policy. As a result of this action, the security guard was terminated. The students were tasked with arguing for the reinstatement of the security guard's job, using the facts that they were presented with in their legal briefs. Students utilized various strategies acquired during their Street Law classes such as the direct and cross examination of witnesses, as well as preparing opening and closing statements. The students were poised, articulate and ready to refute any point that the prosecution presented that did not line up with the facts.

The Georgetown Law students who argued for the prosecution presented a very compelling case; however, the judgment was made in favor of the defendants and the Incarcerated Youth Program Mock Trial Team that represented them. Two students were also recognized for excellence in their representation of the attorneys, and one student was recognized for his representation of a witness. All students received a certificate of recognition.

By Soncyree Lee

Masthead

Publisher/Editor

Sylvia Lane

Writer/Editor/Layout Editor/Photographer

Darby Baham

Contributing Photographer

Regina Gilmore

Contributing Writer

Principal Soncyree Lee

*To submit story
suggestions, please
contact Sylvia Lane
(sylvia.lane2@dc.gov) or
Darby Baham
(darby.baham@dc.gov).*

DOC Graduates 21 in GED Ceremony

The D.C. Jail graduated 21 men in its Spring GED Graduation Ceremony on April 18, 2013. Included in the ceremony were opening remarks from Principal James Greene, poems recited by inmates in the program, and guest remarks from Principal Charles Kirkland of the CTF Academic Program, GED Chief Examiner PremDas, one of the student-inmates in the program, and Warden Gregory Futch.

While not all twenty-one men were present for the ceremony, those who were showed great elation and excitement about achieving a goal they had worked on with their peer tutors, fellow GED program participants, and case managers.

Sonia Elias-Cueto, Case Manager for D.C. Jail, worked with several of the men as they prepared to take their exam and noted the difference in demeanor for this graduating class, as well as the impact of their positive outlooks.

"The men in the last graduating class made it very easy to work with because they were focused, determined, and confident in obtaining their GED," she said. "Some studied after class, evenings, and weekends in a group setting or one-on-one. This kind of positive mindset allowed the program to run smoothly, and it set a different tone for the housing unit."

Ms. Elias-Cueto also noted that the graduating class was having a great impact on others. "I [also] began to see other students apply themselves, and I'd like to believe that it was because they saw that the graduating class achieved their goals and believed that they could too," she said.

Following the remarks, the graduating students participated in the conferring of certificates and the changing of their tassels.



DOC GED graduates and tutors during the ceremony.
Photo Credit: Darby Baham